

VZCZCXRO9577
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBK #5127/01 2701052
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 271052Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9846
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 4891
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 7713
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 1428
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 3661
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE 1875
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 4754
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 1426
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE 0116
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 0758
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN IMMEDIATE 0890
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 9818
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI IMMEDIATE 4143
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 5184
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHFJSCC/COMMARFORPAC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 005127

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NSC FOR PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/27/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [KDM](#) [TH](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: U.S., BRITISH AMBASSADORS PRESS GENERAL SONTHI ON
BURMA

BANGKOK 00005127 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. General Sonthi Boonyaratglin told the Ambassador that he hopes that the confrontation in Burma would be resolved by peaceful means but the situation could result in further bloodshed if the Burmese military does not refuse orders from the regime. Sonthi explained that his comments September 26 indicating that the authorities had acted properly were made before any reports of violence and the declaration of martial law and agreed that military action against demonstrators in Burma would be wrong and that any resolution should be peaceful. End Summary.

12. (C) The Ambassador and UK Ambassador Quinton Quayle September 27 jointly called on Royal Thai Army (RTA) Commander-in-Chief and Chairman of the Council for National Security General Sonthi Boonyaratglin to discuss the situation in Burma and Sonthi's unhelpful September 26 comments on the situation there. General Anupong Paojinda, who will replace Sonthi in the next few days, sat in. The Ambassador asked General Sonthi whether the Royal Thai Army (RTA) had information on events in Burma. General Sonthi said that even though it is difficult to get a clear picture of the situation in Burma, the root of the problem is the Burmese dictators. Because of the unyielding stance of the dictatorship, it is difficult for the people to achieve their hope of democratic government. Sonthi stated that the only way to truly resolve the situation is through the will of the people being expressed through democratic means. If Aung San Suu Kyi were released, it would be the direct result of the people's efforts. Sonthi said the situation bears close watching in the next two or three days.

13. (C) Sonthi said after declaration of martial law and the Burmese regime's orders to prevent monks from leaving temples, it may be more difficult for the people to succeed. Despite the presence of troops in Rangoon, Sonthi said he does not know whether it was the Burmese military (as opposed to the police) that had fired on protesters and the RTA does not know which troops are now stationed in Rangoon. He had not received any reports of split within the Burmese military ranks. The RTA, however, had heard that the military commander in Rangoon had been replaced in recent days.

14. (C) The Ambassador asked General Sonthi whether the RTA has discussed the events in Burma with their counterparts from India and China. General Sonthi responded that no discussions have taken place but agreed that such communication would be helpful. When asked by the Ambassador whether the RTA could influence the Burmese regime, Sonthi demurred and said the RTA does not have regular communication with the regime.

15. (C) The Ambassadors told Sonthi that his September 26 comments on Burma (see below) appeared to be sympathetic to the Burmese dictators and supportive of using violence in suppressing the protests. Sonthi denied that was his intent. He had made his comments before any reports of violence and before the regime declared martial law. Sonthi said he was describing how, before the declaration of martial law, the Burmese people and government had been using Thai methods in the confrontation. The people were using monks as the face of the protests and the Burmese regime had initially employed police to address the protests. When asked if he will clarify his comments in the future, Sonthi said now that the RTG has formulated a public policy (septel), he will support that new policy as he hopes the Burmese regime will exercise restraint and resolve the situation peacefully.

BANGKOK 00005127 002.2 OF 002

16. (C) Sonthi said he had not received any reports of a divide within the Burmese military, and the Burmese people and military are currently on opposing sides. If the situation came to a head and there is no split within the military, whereby elements of the military may switch to support the democracy movement, a violent crackdown would likely follow. Sonthi said the Burmese military would win if a confrontation erupts unless elements of the military refuse to follow orders from the regime.

17. (U) A Human Rights Watch (HRW) official based in Thailand circulated the following translation of televised remarks by General Sonthi on the night of September 26:

BEGIN HRW TRANSLATION

"Regarding the dispersal of demonstrations, the Burmese government did not use military forces. Police were deployed. That was the right approach. It has been used by every country -- that the military must step back to let police take charge. But the actual tactics may vary from country to country. However, I think there is no violence in the current situation. Everything is under control. The Burmese government is still in control of the situation. On the reports that Buddhist monks were assaulted (during the dispersal of demonstrations), that cannot be concluded just from looking at the photos. As it happened in Thailand, sometimes people used violence against officials. So officials may have to defend themselves. There has been no political suppression. Burmese authorities should understand that it -- getting Buddhist monks involved in the demonstrations -- is a tactic used by demonstrators. So Burmese authorities understand that they cannot use violence against Buddhist monks. They must use a soft approach. I was informed that Burma uses dialogue to solve the problem, and senior Buddhist monks have helped negotiate to end the

problem. I do not think Burma will care (about international pressure), because it does not really depend on anyone. Burma has been taking care of itself all along. It does not accept interference from outside. Moreover, there are many countries that have discretely helped protect Burma -- such as China and Korea. That is because Burma has plenty natural resources that many major powers want to have their hand on. We are neighbor (of Burma). If we get involved, that will undermine our relationship."

END HRW TRANSLATION

COMMENT

¶8. (C) We took the high road with Sonthi, rather than immediately jumping on his ill-advised statement, and by the end he was more or less saying the right things. As noted in septel, Thai public pronouncements seem to be evolving in a better direction but the key will be what they decide to say in New York.

ENTWISTLE